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B R I E F,

BUT, IT IS PRESUMED,

A SUFFICIENT ANSWER

TO THE

PHILOSOPHY *of* MASONS;

INTENDED FOR THE BENEFIT

Such UNLETTERED PERSONS,

As may have perused that WORK,

TO THEIR SPIRITUAL INJURY.

By the Reverend H. E. HOLDER.

Monstrum informe, ingens, cui *lumen* ademptum!

VIRGIL.

B R I S T O L:

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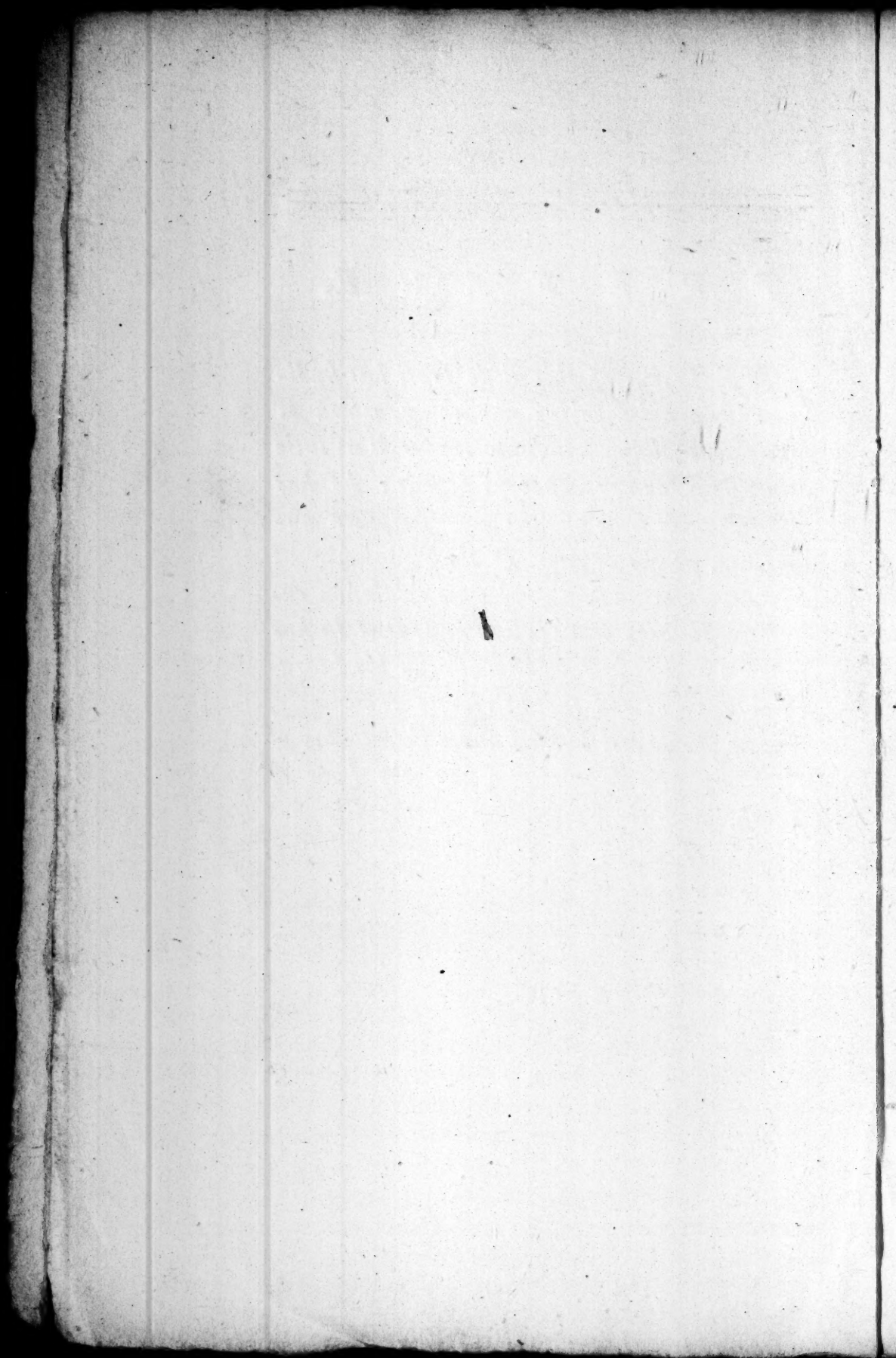
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P R E F A C E.

THE Writer of this little tract has studiously avoided saying any thing, which is superfluous; being wishful to render it as little voluminous and expensive as possible: he has also refrained from quoting any scripture authorities, as the Writer of the Philosophy of Masons unfortunately proscribes revelation entirely. He begs leave just to add, that he has heard a most respectable character of his Learned antagonist; and that he regrets exceedingly, that he should feel himself under the necessity of attacking him so violently, as the Love of Truth, and the Vindication of the Glorious Gospel, of which he is an humble minister, oblige him to do. —

Portland-street, Kingsdown,
Bristol, March 30, 1791.



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B R I E F,

BUT, IT IS PRESUMED,

A SUFFICIENT ANSWER, &c.

NEVER has there been a Work obtruded on the public, of more pernicious tendency than the *Philosophy of Masans*: and if one were wishful to assign the only possible reason, which could have actuated the writer to have invented such a system of error, it would be out of the power of Charity itself to conceive any other, than that of doing All the mischief he was able. In the dedication [p. v.] he sets out with saying that "the discovery and acknowledgement of
" truth

“ truth are incompatible with the existence
 “ of an established religion :” now, if religion
 means any thing, it must be, precisely, the
 discovery and acknowledgement of truth : —
 or, if Christianity, as professed and estab-
 lished by the Church of England, be suppo-
 sed inimical, in its principles to truth ; and
 the *Philosophy of Masons* contain the de-
 tection of its falshood, surely *this* established
 religion has at least a claim to the approbation
 of this new philosopher, for fully tolerating
 his own hardy attacks. As to his Religion of
 Pleasure ; [p. vii.] if he means by pleasure
Sensuality, he exposes himself immediately
 to the contempt of every rational being : if,
 on the contrary he means *reasonable Gratifi-*
cation, he will be at a loss to produce a Cause
 so fruitful in such an effect as the religion of
 Jesus Christ : the beatitudes he has pronoun-
 ced ; the Golden rule he has established ; and
 his Doctrines of Love, Charity, and Placa-
 bility, are proofs of this, which cannot be
 denied.

It is very extraordinary, that in his fictiti-
 ous account of his favorite Jewish teacher, he
 should have thought it worth his while to have
 invested him with any virtuous or amiable
 qualities at all. According to Him, there
 could be no motive whatsoever, which should
 instigate

instigate a man to submit to the discipline of virtue: when he denies that Virtue is an attribute applicable to the Deity; (p. 65.) when he spurns at the idea of his being a *Moral Governor*, where can be the wisdom, or the obligation, in Man, to be virtuous? And whence did it enter into the mind of Men to think Virtue more laudable or binding on human practice than Vice; often as it must unavoidably happen that the latter answers the purpose of present profit, and pleasure, Better than the former?—He asserts without compunction, that God has nothing to do with this world: surely then it would have been much more Consistent to have made his hero a man of pleasure, of free, easy, unrestrained manners, who made Self his idol, and Self-gratification his sum-mum bonum: much better would it have become the writer who has been daring enough to assert, that “the picture of the lascivious Jupiter, or the jolly Bacchus, “is equally just with the account of the God “of Hosts of the Jews,” (comp. p. 67, and 68) to have made his philosopher lascivious and jolly, than one, “on whose eye glistered the pearl of gratitude, and whose “heart flowed with the milk of humanity:” (p. 19) if “a virtuous deity is the greatest monster of the *Entia rationis*,” (p. 65) why
 should

should man ever aspire to virtue?—But what is the reason of this assertion?—Because, says this elaborate writer, that “virtue implies self-denial;”—surely not in a *perfect* being.—Virtue no further implies self-denial, than as it is allowed that self is inclined to evil, as in such an imperfect, degenerate being as man: In him, virtue *must* imply self-denial:—but in a *perfect* being, who sees, wills, and acts, agreeably to truth and the reality of things, virtue has nothing to do with self-denial: it means *rectitude*; and necessarily belongs to a being, whom we conceive to be perfect. Our philosopher seems to suppose that all his perfection consists in *Immutability*; and to understand by immutability, a certain inflexibility, which renders him intirely regardless of every thing which concerns his creatures: therefore he denies the possibility that the apparent anomalies of this present life should be rectified in the life to come: and why?—Because, he says, that “it is a perversion of all reasoning (p. 66) to conclude, that if the Deity acts “not according to the laws of exact retribution *here*, that he will change his conduct, “and act by different laws *hereafter*: and “that if an immutable being, with whom “there can be no shadow of change, is not “just, according to *our* ideas of justice, in
this

“ *this* world, he will never be just in another.” He talks of *gratis dicta*; and certainly there never was any thing more *gratis dictum* than this; for what are the *laws* by which the Supreme being acts? Can they be independent on his *will*? Who is the *lawgiver*, who dictated to him a rule which he is obliged to follow?—And, if revelation has pointed out to us, what reason and experience cannot fail to justify,—that man being a reasonable and an accountable agent, some scene of probation is necessary for his improvement; and that *this* world is that scene of probation; to which *the next* is to succeed as a scene of retribution; where is the difficulty of reconciling such a scheme to our intellect? And where is the *injustice* of God’s withholding the reward of persevering Virtue, when he has impressed on the mind and conscience of every person so qualified, his approbation of his conduct, and an assurance of a future reward, which he already *anticipates*?—His definition of the Supreme being, as “one, immaterial and “self-existent, *of whom nothing can be known*,” is just calculated to strike at the root of all revelation, to break every possible connection between God and man, and to destroy all the restraints from vice, and all the obligations to virtue. Violently as he may op-

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pose the idea of a *Moral governor*, I assert that his own conscience must be peculiarly callous, not to bear an internal testimony of the moral attributes of his maker, to him, by deciding upon the nature of every action he commits himself:—how much it is to be wished, that it had convinced him of the infamy of having invented, published, and propagated, such a work as the *Philosophy of Masons*!—We shall say nothing of his ideas of creation, distinct from man, he may be as speculative and singular, as he pleases, on subjects which do not invade the peace of society: but when he tells us (p. 135) that “*Nerve* is the source of all the boasted powers of man;” that “his actions are the offspring of *necessity*;” he must allow us to protest against his infidelity, and to combat the impiety of his opinions. He says that he has *demonstrated* that there can be but *One* immaterial being:—For his own sake, he may wish, and eagerly believe, that he has done so: but to no other man—less assiduous in the work of Satan—can he appear to be so successful: how is it *possible* that he can prove, that, “by granting other immaterial beings, horrible atheism is the native, necessary, and unavoidable result;” (p. 153) it passes my powers to comprehend. “If man requires the possession of an immaterial
“ soul,

“soul, there is no other animal, whose claim
 “is not as indisputably valid,” is his curious
 argument; and where would be the *Atheism*
 of such a scheme of multiplied immateriality?
 —Although it is not quite so clear to other
 intellects as to those of T. M. that the Imma-
 teriality of the Human soul, proves an imma-
 terial soul belonging to *brute* animals. The
 case is, that the Existence of such a soul in
Man, is not a matter of *speculation*, but of
positive Fact; the truth of which we *Feel*,
 our selves, too incontrovertibly to be questi-
 oned. Every one, who is attentive to what
 passes in his own mind, is conscious that
 there is a presiding principle within him—
 independent on his corporeal nature, which
wills and thinks, imagines and remembers, un-
 assisted and unfettered by That;—and which,
 even at those times of rest, when the body is
 dormant and inactive, is busily employed in
 recalling past events, or imagining new
 ones; and ever reasons, upon the same *ethic*
 premises, as, when actuating the active *body*,
 it directs and impels it to a conduct, in
 which Both are immediately concerned. I
 omit entering into a minute discussion of his
 Obscene and impious illustration of his doc-
 trine: (p. 154, and 155) I would only say,
 on that part of the subject, that God Al-
 mighty will judge every man according to his

works: and that if one man be descended from an Infamous, and Another from a Respectable, parent, neither the Infamy of the one, nor the Respectability of the other, can affect the Future condition of their offspring, *independently of their own conduct*. Whether Souls are *pre-existent* or not, is of no consequence, with respect to their *Existence*: nor is it at all more important to *that* point, whether they are quiescent with the *dead body*, or not; although to *myself* it is a matter very evident, that it is *impossible* that they should *Ever* be quiescent.—

Our philosopher informs us that “Interference is inconsistent with perfect prescience.” (p. 158) Why will a finite being—and *such* a finite being as he represents human nature to be—presume to say what *is*, or what *is not*, inconsistent with Divine perfection!—Does the Interference of God imply an *operose* exertion; or a renewal of what was before weakly omitted, neglected, or forgotten? May it not be consistent with the scheme of his creation and providence, that various orders of beings may respectively tend to the preservation of other inferior beings? And may it not be More conducive to the virtue of men, to look up to a being, whose care and providence they are taught daily to hope, is operating to their advantage;
than

than to a being, who, having wound them up as machines, on their First outset into life, leaves them to go down gradually, through the succeeding course of it, without the support of his continual interference ?

I must confess that our *Hakim* has acted with great consistency in endeavouring to invalidate the several authorities, upon which the Truth of revelation depends in respect of Human testimony. He is very civil in his opinion of Matthew, *in the main* ; though he has taken up the idea of his two first chapters being spurious ; but why, it will not be easy to shew, to the satisfaction of a *candid* examiner. He is grievously offended with the destruction of the herd of swine. Does he not recollect that swine were in fact a proscribed property among the Jews ; and that it might have been a *just* punishment to the keepers, even agreeably to their own notions of moral propriety and equity, for having kept so polluted and useless a herd.

And where is the absurdity of the assertion concerning the Rising of the Bodies of the Saints, at the time—not of the *crucifixion*, but the * *resurrection* of our Lord ?—Where
was

* και [οἱ κεκοιμημένοι] ἐξελθόντες ἐκ τῶν μνημείων μετὰ τὴν ἐγερσιν αὐτοῦ, &c. c. xxvii. ver. 53. The Transaction is mentioned *antecedently* at the time of his crucifixion,

was the wonder that at that moment when he burst the cerements of the tomb, he might have given an instantaneous *vitality* to other dead bodies, to rise and bear testimony to his being the "Lord of Life," and Saviour of men.

What it is that creates *nausea* in the style of Mark, we must leave to the delicate scrupulosity of this great Hakim to determine. Luke, as a *physician*, (just as a mariner will tell you that his friend is *a gentleman and a sailor*) is allowed to be "an elegant writer, "and well acquainted with the finer feelings "of the human heart." (p. 169) It is to be regretted, however, that such an "amiable "writer should have been *insane*;" and that so many Wise and Good men should not be as well able to judge of his insanity as T. M. —The Wise and Good will not however subscribe to this assertion; any more than to that which makes out, that "if the writings of "John had been suppressed, it would have "been no loss to the Christian cause." (p. 170) Even the circumstance of "Lazarus coming "forth from his tomb with his arms and legs "still bound," (p. 171) they can swallow; when they learn that Bodies were deposited among the Jews in niches, in one of which Lazarus lying upon his back, might raise himself

Self into a sitting posture, and then putting his legs over the edge of his nich or cell, might slide down, and stand upright on the floor, tho' he was not disencumbered of his grave clothes: (See Macknight's Gospel History. B. 1. C. 14. §. 3. and Maundrell's Travels, p. 76.)

It is certainly very far below the wisdom of so great a Hakim, as our Masonic philosopher, to have examined the account of the reconcilement meaning of the Book of Revelations; altho' sanctified by the name of Sir Isaac Newton. Had it been consistent with his greatness to have had recourse to any such pauntry authority, he might have been spared the childish observations he has made upon the figures and allusions adopted by the prophetic historian.

His doctrine of Miracles is truly absurd. Cannot the Deity attest his Truth, by his Power? and how is a "*real* miracle a contradiction in terms?" and how "incompatible with the Immutability of the Deity?"—— (p.179) has he any where declared that he will never interfere by miracles, for the good of his creatures? are there not changes taking place in the state of almost every-man, which
shew

shew that it is matter of *fact*, that the scheme of their lives and condition is not intended to be always Uniform and Monotonous?—And how are “prophesies inadmissible as a proof of any fact?”—May not a perfect Being *Foresee*, and enable his Creatures to *Foretell*? If He first infused the Gift of Speech, and impressed the capacity of forming ideas, to be clothed in words, and uttered in sounds, may he not also impress *Particular* ideas?

What our Philosopher says in reproach to our Blessed Lord’s character (p. 181) is too shocking to be calmly considered. That such a Reptile as man should presume to question the propriety of any thing done or said by the Lord Jesus Christ, is horrid to conceive! Well might he have applied his expression of *generation of vipers*, to such cavillers; who dare to object mistake to him, even from his own words; and that, upon the score of a prophecy, misapprehended by his disciples and apostles!

After all that has been elsewhere said, on the sufficiency of evidence, belonging to the Fact of our Lord’s resurrection it is unnecessary to enter here into the frivolous objections of this wonderfully self-sufficient Teacher: if he will have the candour to read attentively
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the Trial of the witnesses for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he will, it is hoped, see the folly of them.

I do not propose to answer minutely all his objections to a future state ; for they are all generally removed by an appeal to every thinking man's feelings. We are all conscious that we are accountable, by the reproaches of conscience on the commission of sin : and we all look forward, in the article of death, to another state of existence, the events of which, almost invariably, disturb, alarm, and distress, the mind of the dying man. And as to what is said concerning the little effect which the idea of a futurity produces upon the conduct of men, this only proves the extent of Human profligacy and perverseness: for surely if it be supposed that the doctrine of a Future state *May* be a true one, it must be granted to have a *natural* tendency to render men more cautious, than if they conceived that every thing Began and Ended with this life.—Were it true that “ the most exalted characters, the “ most severely and perfectly virtuous are to “ be found among those who had no idea of “ a future state” (p. 205) tho' this position will never be granted by a christian) it is not *possible* to prove, that such a Belief would have impaired their virtue ; would not have erected,

ed, encouraged, and sustained it, for more illustrious exertions, than it was otherwise capable of making.—Our Philosopher wishes to be a prophet, and talks of a time to come, when “the baseless notion of a future state” (p. 207):—should that be the case, *We* shall then be quietly *sleeping* in our graves: but should the event be otherwise, and *he* should *awake*, beyond *his*, what must be the consequence?

What he has said on the subject of Religion in general, shews the extent of human folly and iniquity, when once we let lose the reins to our corruptions.

Man is naturally religious: it may be nearly *proved*, that some Religion is to be met with in all countries, and in all states of human civilization: The existence of many *false* religions, is a fair and rational argument that there is some *true* one. This new Reformer of human error may say of it that “it incarcera-
“cerates the human intellect, and encreases
“the miseries of human life;” (p. 223) but let him come to the close of his own life, when the curtain of Futurity begins slowly to rise before him, and the veil to be removed from his own eyes, and he will then see, from what a source of consolation he has precluded himself,

himself, by denying the importance and excellence of Religion, and Christianity in particular.—Who but himself would adventure to assert that the Doctrine and Practice of Christianity imply, that “to please God is to make ourselves miserable; and that in proportion as Religion spreads, human misery increases?” (p. 228)—If he understood his subject, he would know that in the language of scripture we are said to *hate*, that which we love with an affection *inferior* to that which we entertain for some more worthy object of attachment:—if he knew any thing of himself, he would know that for such a degenerate, corrupted, vicious, self-sufficient being as Man, no discipline can be so uncontestedly proper as that of mortification and self-denial: and if he knew any thing of the influence of Christianity, he would know that there is no enjoyment so great, as that which arises from the consciousness of having subdued our passions to our duty, of our having resigned ourselves to the will of God, and of our being filled with the hope of his favor, protection, and reward. (See p. 228 and 225.)

One of the most extraordinary assertions he makes is—that “all worship has been idolatrous:” (p. 242) and that “every man was, is, and must be necessarily, an

“ idolater, who is a worshipper :” (p. 254) and that “ Christians are as much idolaters “ as any of the Pagans :” (p. 255) and by way of illustration he considers the worship of the Son of God, in union with that of “ the Bones “ of Saints, precious relics, images, pictures, “ &c.”—nay, contrasts that worship, with the worship of “ a crocodile, a cat, a monkey’s “ tooth, and an onion !” (See p. 255, & 256) God, too is made never “ to intend or to expect, that Mankind should worship him :” (p. 259.) He is denied to be infinitely good, or to intend the happiness of man ; or to have annexed felicity to virtue, and misery to vice : (See p. 260. & 261.) the whole scheme of Christianity is set at nought ; and both the Degeneracy of man, and the efficacy of supernatural grace, made objects of ridicule : (p. 262, 263) the denunciation of punishment to the infidel, and the origin and excellence of Truth, are alike exploded : and every thing that God has revealed of himself at once contradicted by the hardy affirmation that “ our knowledge of God is total darkness,” (p. 264) and the Resurrection to Judgment considered as a proof that God is *not* a being of pure benevolence, because “ the wicked are then “ to be doomed to punishment, without mitigation, and without end.” (p. 265) What an assemblage of Blasphemy and impiety is here

here presented to the reader!—Is there a Man, who has not dedicated an excellent and highly improved understanding to the invention, pursuit, and propagation of error, who can conceive that Devotion is not becoming from Creatures like us, to such a being as God?—That the Humiliation, I say, of a being overwhelmed with wants and infirmities, before the Throne of grace, filled by a being, infinitely able and infinitely willing to relieve him, should be regarded and declared to be equally as idolatrous and absurd, as falling down to a stock, and worshipping a vegetable?—That the religious Habits of all Mankind, in all ages, do not prove that God is “a hearer of prayer,” and is a *moral governor*, who demands the veneration and adoration of his subjects? Is there a Being who has *felt* that God has been gracious to him, who does not tremble for the man, who dares to deny the divine benevolence and philanthropy? Is there a conscience which has been ever racked with remorse, that does not acknowledge that man is an accountable agent, and *will* account to his God for his actions;—that does not own that sin is against Conviction, and divine illumination, and that the Judgment denounced against the wicked is Real, Just, and Equitable? I do not ask these questions of Divines and Holy men: I ask them
of

of the world at large: I would ask them of the Devils themselves, who *Believe and Tremble!*—Would to God, I could ask them of the writer of *the Philosophy of Masons*, with any hope that he would answer them candidly, and honestly?—Alas! Such a Hope, in favor of a mind so hackneyed in speculative error at least, would not fail to be delusive: God only, who can bring light out of darkness, can remedy an Evil so great, so deplorably enormous! To his power, and to his mercy, I would therefore commit this philosopher; and with the most fervent prayer for his speedy conviction, bid adieu to Him and to his work together.

THE END.

